



Stone Soup

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Stearns Farm CSA • Community Supported Agriculture

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ABOUT KATHY STEARNS FARMER AND LEADER

An Interview by Linda Chuss, Sharer

As a CSA farmer, Kathy has a unique job that makes the most of her varied talents and complements her holistic values. "My love of the land first came from my father, a non-organic dairy farmer in Minnesota," she said. Those early years also imparted Kathy with the work ethic and lifestyle of farming. When she moved to Boston, she developed her administrative and managerial skills as the founder of a nonprofit organization benefiting the elderly.

Kathy is the proud mother of two sons, Andrew, 20, and Galen, 18, who are both currently living in Guatemala. Her talented volunteer husband is Brian Huckins, this year's MVP at Stearns. She home schooled her two boys and developed her respect for balance from the regular need to create learning paths for them. In the Fall of '98, with the boys more independent as teenagers, she said "I was looking for what to do next when the opportunity at Stearns came up." Although Kathy's growing experience extended only to plants in her home garden, she told the Stearns' board she'd give it her all. And she has ever since.

That first winter Kathy contacted local CSA farmers, who shared their knowledge and crop plans with her. Kathy adopted one of those plans for the first season and has continually adapted it based on her experience information she gains at conferences she attends in the winter.

Her efforts these past seven years have proven fruitful. Kathy has led the effort to turn 2.75 acres of weeds as high as an elephant's eye into healthy and extremely productive fields that provide plentiful vegetables and berries for sharers' families. But the challenges haven't ended. Kathy shares, "We've got agricultural sustainability, but not financial sustainability. It's hard to determine and maintain the proper balance between the economics and the integrity of the farm."

In that vein, Stearns has moved from a cozy 60 sharers to this year's 150, still a friendly size. The community is an aspect of Stearns Kathy most appreciates. Another is the flowers, Kathy revealed: "I was surprised at how much I came to love them. At first I thought flowers were a waste because you couldn't eat them. But it's so peaceful there. Now I go to the flowers to relax." Kathy continues to be amazed by the variation in each type of vegetable, their unique characteristics and needs. "Balance is critical for the health of the plants, ourselves, and the earth" says Kathy.

In her office, a picture of her father astride his tractor provides Kathy with inspiration. As he has done for her, Kathy passes along to her extended farm family how to best use the gifts of the farm.



WHAT'S NEW THIS WEEK: Fall cabbage, celeriac, butternut squash

PYO: Chard, kale, cherry tomatoes, hot peppers, tomatillos, field herbs and flowers

WHAT'S ON THE WAY: Russet potatoes, fennel, parsley root, sweet potatoes



FROM THE FIELD By Kathy Huckins, Farm Manager

CELERIAC, CELERY ROOT: Celeriac is short on looks--being a pitted and gnarled ball shaped root with straggly rootlets--but great on taste. This parsley and celery scented bulb, a variety of branch celery cultivated for its unders rather than its uppers, is delicious. Trim the stocks and save to season soups and stews. Then refrigerate, wrapped in plastic until ready to use. To prepare, scrub with a brush, trim off and compost the bottom and top of the bulb, roots and all. Then cut for use. It can be grated into salads, but shines best in soups especially with potatoes and other roots. Give it a try.

BUTTERNUT SQUASH: We grow the variety called Waltham Butternut, developed at the UMass Waltham Breeding Station in the 1950's. It has the longest storage potential of all squash species. After careful curing in the greenhouse it is sweet, vibrant orange, and full of seeds that are good for roasting as well.

GARLIC: This week Brian put 1 to 2 inches of compost on our garlic beds. Then he spaded them in preparation for planting on the 22nd. We will be "popping" garlic (splitting the cloves from the bulb) on the 21st **ALL DAY**. Please come and help either or both days. We love our garlic and need to put it to bed in style. What we don't use you can take home. If it rains we'll wait a week.



TIME IS RUNNING OUT!

Only a few weeks left to put in your work hours on the farm. If you are unable to work your hours, please let us know ASAP so we can hire labor to work your hours. You will be charged \$8 per hour. Remember you can work every morning starting at 9 AM, Tuesday through Saturday.

CELERIAC SALAD

- 1 small celeriac
- 2-3 large carrots
- 2 small apples
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise

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- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 3 tbs. lemon juice
- Salt, pepper to taste

Peel and grate celeriac, apples and carrots. Toss with lemon juice. Mix together sour cream, mayonnaise, salt and pepper, toss with salad.

BEET-CELERIAC BAKE

- 3-4 large beets
- 1 large celeriac

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- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/2 cup stock

Thinly slice beets and celeriac. Alternate layers of beets and celeriac (celeriace on the bottom, then beet, then celeriac, then beet again). Pour over orange juice and stock. Cover and put into a preheated 350 degree oven for 20 minutes. Uncover and increase heat to 425 degrees, bake another 10 minutes.

CELERIAC AND LEEK SOUP

Serves 4

- 3 leeks
- 1.5 pounds whole celeriac
- 1 medium potato
- 3 tbs. of butter (margarine works well too)

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- 4-5 cups of chicken or vegetable stock
- Cream (optional)
- Salt and pepper

Wash leeks and slice using as much of the leek as possible. Peel and chop celeriac into small cubes and put in some water to which a little lemon juice has been added to stop the celeriac discoloring. Wash, peel and coarsly chop the potato (leave the skin on if desired, but this does leave little pieces of dark skin in the soup) and place in the bowl with the celeriac. Melt butter in large pan and stir in the chopped leeks and cook till wilted. Drain the celeriac and potato and add to the pan and stir into leeks. Add the stock and bring to the boil, reduce the heat, cover and simmer until tender (approx 20-25 mins). Remove from heat. Wisk it all together until you reach the preferred texture. Stir in a couple of tablespoons of cream (or more if you wish), season with salt and pepper.

CELERIAC PAVE

Serves 12

- 2 lbs. of celeriac, peeled and thinly sliced
- 5 lbs. large Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced

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- 1 liter heavy cream
- 1/2 pound blue cheese, crumbled

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Layer celeriac and potato slices in a greased ovenproof pan, seasoning with salt and freshly ground white pepper between each layer. Pour cream over top. Bake for 40 to 50 minutes. Remove pan from oven and sprinkle blue cheese on top. Continue to cook for another 15 to 20 minutes until top is golden brown and vegetables are tender.

TIPS

Slice off stalks at the root crown. Soak the root in warm water to loosen dirt in the crevices, then scrub thoroughly with a stiff vegetable brush. If exterior is too tough, peel with a sharp knife. Peeled celeriac will darken when exposed to air; to retard darkening, toss with lemon juice or keep in water. Lemon juice can also be added to cooking water. Here are some simple ideas for eating:

- Parboil peeled celeriac whole for 20 to 30 minutes, half inch to quarter inch slice for 5 to 6 minutes. Top with butter.
- Bake in its skin at 350 degrees F. for 1 hour. Peel and prepare as desired.
- For extra-celery flavor, use instead of common celery in soups, stews, casseroles, and stir-fries.
- Try raw celeriac sticks tossed in your favorite creamy dressing, or use for dipping.
- Grate raw celeriac into salads.
- Boil and mash celeriac with an equal amount of potatoes.